

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARAMA 00290 071529Z
ACTION EB-08

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FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3275

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: ETRD, NS
SUBJ: GSP: FIRST YEAR REVIEW

REF : STATE 67507

1. ALTHOUGH STATISTICS FOR FIRST YEAR GSP IMPORTS FROM SURINAM HAVE NOT YET REACHED EMBASSY, WE DO NOT EXPECT TO SEE ANY SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES FROM VERY SMALL 1975 FIGURES WHICH SHOW ONLY \$134,000 IN IMPORTS NOW COVERED BY GSP. CONVERSATIONS WITH GOS AND LOCAL BUSINESSMEN CONFIRM THAT TO DATE SURINAM HAS NOT TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF GSP BENEFITS IN ANY SUBSTANTIAL WAY.

2. ALTHOUGH EMBASSY MADE SPECIAL EFFORTS TO MAKE GOS AND LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY AWARE OF GSP AND POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES TO SURINAM, FACT IS THAT CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE PRECLUDED ANY SIGNIFICANT IMMEDIATE CHANGES IN PATTERN OF EXPORTS TO THE U.S. DURING FIRST YEAR OF INDEPENDENCE, WHICH COINCIDED WITH FIRST YEAR OF GSP OPERATION, GOS HAS FOLLOWED A CAUTIOUS PATH IN ESTABLISHING AND EXPANDING ITS FOREIGN RELATIONS, INCLUDING TRADE RELATIONS. MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR FOREIGN TRADE, HAS ONLY LIMITED STAFF WITH WHICH TO HANDLE WHOLE RANGE OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND ECONOMIC ISSUES AND SIMPLY HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO FOCUS ON U.S. GSP SYSTEM.

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3. PRESIDENT OF CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY TOLD EMBASSY RECENTLY THAT HE HAS NOT YET HAD A SINGLE QUERY ABOUT THE GSP SYSTEM. HE ESTIMATED THAT ONLY ABOUT TEN SURINAMERS ARE EXPORTING TO THE U.S. EXCLUDING THOSE INVOLVED IN THE BAUXITE AND SHRIMP INDUSTRIES WHICH COMPRISE NEARLY 85 PER CENT OF SURINAM'S MORE THAN \$230 MILLION IN ANNUAL EXPORTS.

4. EMBASSY ITSELF HAS HAD ONLY ABOUT HALF A DOZEN SPECIFIC INQUIRIES ABOUT GSP, NEARLY ALL HAVING TO DO WITH QUESTIONS OF DOCUMENTATION AND AVAILABILITY OF FORMS. ONE EXPORTER DID SAY THAT DUTY ON HIS PRODUCT WAS ALREADY LOW AND WOULD NOT JUSTIFY EFFORT HE WOULD HAVE TO EXPEND TO OBTAIN GSP ENTRY.

5. IMPORTANCE OF GSP TO SURINAM LIES LARGELY IN FUTURE IMPACT IT WILL HAVE ON INVESTMENT DECISIONS OF GOS AND PRIVATE SECTOR. OTHER LOCAL FACTORS, INCLUDING SHORTAGES OF SKILLED LABOR, TROUBLES WITH LABOR UNIONS, AND UNCERTAINTY SURROUNDING SURINAM'S POST-INDEPENDENCE COURSE HAVE SLOWED PRIVATE INVESTMENT, BUT GOS WILL BE UNDERTAKING NEW EXPORT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND WILL OF COURSE LOOK AT PRODUCTS WHICH HAVE THE BEST MARKET POTENTIAL. SURINAM IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE EC THROUGH THE LOME CONVENTION AND ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF ITS EXPORTS GO TO THE EC, APPROXIMATELY THE SAME PROPORTION THAT ARE SENT TO THE U.S. HENCE, EC PREFERENCES WILL ALSO BE OF SIGNIFICANT CONCERN TO GOS AS IT MAKES EXPORT-RELATED INVESTMENT DECISIONS.
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